

Jack Anderson's Washington Merry-go-round

F Post 1-18-74 Taps link Mafia to JFK death

WASHINGTON — In a recent column, we reported that the most intriguing of the conspiracy theories, in connection with the murder of John F. Kennedy, involved Mafia bosses Carlos Marcello and Santos Trafficante.

The House Assassination Committee will conclude that organized crime had the "motive, means and opportunity" to kill the president. Although there is no direct evidence that the mob hierarchy met and planned the assassination, the committee's final report will give indirect evidence linking Marcello and Trafficante to Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby.

The most compelling evidence of a Mafia motive for killing Kennedy is provided by underworld figures themselves, in more than 300 volumes of transcripts made from FBI taps of the nation's top crime figures. Ralph J. Salerno, a recognized authority on organized crime, supervised the committee staff's painstaking examination of the transcripts.

The wiretap evidence reveals the mob's deep-seated hatred of the Kennedy brothers, and Salerno pinpoints the reason: Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy's relentless pursuit of the syndicate.

"By 1963," Salerno told the committee, "the FBI had a very complete and accurate picture of who was doing what and where they were doing it (inside the Mafia) . . . You had total penetration of the organization." The Mafia, for the

first time in its infamous history, was scared.

A transcript of an intercepted telephone conversation of May 22, 1963, six months to the day before the assassination in Dallas, shows that Buffalo crime boss Stefano Magaddino lamented: "We are in a bad situation . . . They (the FBI) know everything under the sun. They know who's back of it . . . They know there's a Commission (of mob leaders). We got to watch out right now . . . and stay as quiet as possible."

In October, a month before the assassination, Magaddino was almost hysterical, saying: "They should kill the whole (Kennedy) family. The mother, the father too."

In another transcript of a tapped conversation of May, 1963, two Cosa Nostra figures in New York talked about the attorney general's campaign against the mob. "Bob Kennedy won't stop until he puts us all in jail all over the country," said one mobster. "Until the Commission meets and puts its foot down, things will be at a standstill."

About the same time, Angelo Bruno, the organized crime leader in Philadelphia, listened while an associate told him what they should do to President Kennedy. "With Kennedy, a guy should take a knife. Somebody should kill the (expletive deleted). I mean it. Honest to God . . . Right in the White House. Somebody's got to get rid of this (expletive deleted)."

The transcripts helped convince the

committee that the mob had a motive for killing President Kennedy. The committee will also note that in the early 1960s Marcello was regarded by experts as "heavy-handed" and outside the control of the Mafia hierarchy.

House investigators asked Salerno whether the Kennedy shooting in Dealey Plaza had the earmarks of a mob "hit." In its final report, the committee will conclude that on its face the assassination did not look like mob handiwork. It will note the traditional Mafia reluctance to use "nondependable, nondescript people" instead of professional killers for gangland murders.

The report, however, will acknowledge three exceptions to the rule. Two of these were famous: the 1956 acid-blinding of labor columnist Victor Riesel and the 1971 shooting of Joe Columbo. In both cases, the mob used outsiders — and in both cases, the hit men died shortly after the job was done.

The third exception was the 1970 murder of a Kansas City, Mo., businessman by four street thugs who were hired by a lower-echelon mobster. The businessman was a witness in a federal gambling prosecution. The four thugs and the Mafioso who hired them were caught and convicted.

While the committee investigators have no evidence of a top-level mob plan to kill Kennedy, they don't discount the possibility that one or more Mafia hoods may have decided to take matters into . . . and stay as quiet as possible."

The clearest earmark of a mob killing, investigators tell us, was Jack Ruby's execution of Oswald, a standard under-

world way of silencing the man who could talk.

CARTER'S COMPETITION: Apparently, President Carter will face some stiff opposition in the 1980 presidential race. According to Federal Elections Commission records, 20 different Americans already have indicated they intend to seek the top job. Among them are candidates for the Puritan Ethic Prohibition and Magnetohydrodynamics Party, God and the God and Country Party, the National Christian Party, the Pyramid of Freedom Party and the Peace Party.